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The Lagrange Study: An Effort Toward More Meaningful Preparation for Preservice Elementary Teachers in the Inner City.

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The Off Campus Methods Course (OCMC), devised to relate closely the theory of methods courses to actual teaching experience, consists of three episodes (teaching map and globe skills, using a questioning strategy, and individualizing instruction), each comprised of four phases. In the theoretical phase, an education professor teaches the strategy to be used in a particular teaching episode. In the demonstrational phase, preservice teachers observe a demonstration teacher using the same strategy to teach a lesson. In the applicational phase, preservice teachers and cooperating teachers plan a microteaching experience, and the preservice teachers teach the lesson. In the analytical phase, preservice teachers and their professors analyze the microteaching experiences, which have been recorded on video tape. OCMC offers certain advantages. Preservice teachers can immediately apply the educational theory they learn, and they have earlier opportunities (junior year in college) for contact with children in actual classroom settings. Moreover, using preservice teachers in inner city classrooms provides children with increased opportunities to interact with and respond to adults. After a six-week pilot run of OCMC (35 preservice teachers in six elementary school classes) at Lagrange School in Toledo, Ohio, participants agreed that OCMC had made a worthwhile contribution to their preservice preparation. Future trial of OCMC is planned. (SG)

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THE LAGRANGE STUDY: AN EFFORT TOWARD MORE MEANINGFUL PREPARATION FOR PRE-SERVICE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN THE INNER CITY.

Have you wondered if methods courses are sufficiently meaningful and realistic for the person destined to teach in the inner city? Perhaps we should wonder when consumers of teacher education give testimony like this:

> No film or classroom lecture presented a realistic picture of the acute behavior problems in an average class in P.S. 63. The ostracized daughter of a prostitute, the boy who believed in voodo and thus was responsible for none of his 'bad' acts, the boy who threatened to jump out of the window after his father had left the family, one hyperactive child receiving tranquilizers in addition to his weekly visits to a hospital mental clinic--this was in addition to the normal hostility and confusion about personal worth which characterized these Negro children...the psychology course and the auditorium conditions were too abstract for me to apply under fire.[1]

Comments like these argue cogently for teacher education efforts of in-relationship to the dynamics of the real classroom situation. We need not only to cultivate the desired teacher behaviors in students learning to teach, but cultivate them in a setting of dynamic realism. One means toward this end is the Off Campus Methods Course (hereafter OCMC) about which I'd like to talk with you this morning.

Before going on, I should clear up a possible misconception or two which could be generated by the title of my part of this program.

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[1]Alexander Sharp, "Intensive Teacher Training Program," THE URBAN REVIEW. 2:2-ff, December, 1967.

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1. The application of OCMC at the Lagrange elementary school in Toledo was a study of feasibility. We wanted answers to quite basic questions like: Could we do it? Was the idea practical? This was not an experiment in the empirical sense. That is yet to come. As they might say in Dearborn, Michigan, we had designed a new Mustang, and we wanted to run it around the track a couple of times to make sure the wheels wouldn't fly off before turning it over to the research people for more extensive study.

2. OCMC is not presented as a panacea, but as something that has been tried, needs more trying out, but which does appear to have some potential for making preservice teacher preparation more realistic and meaningful than the conventional approaches now in general use.

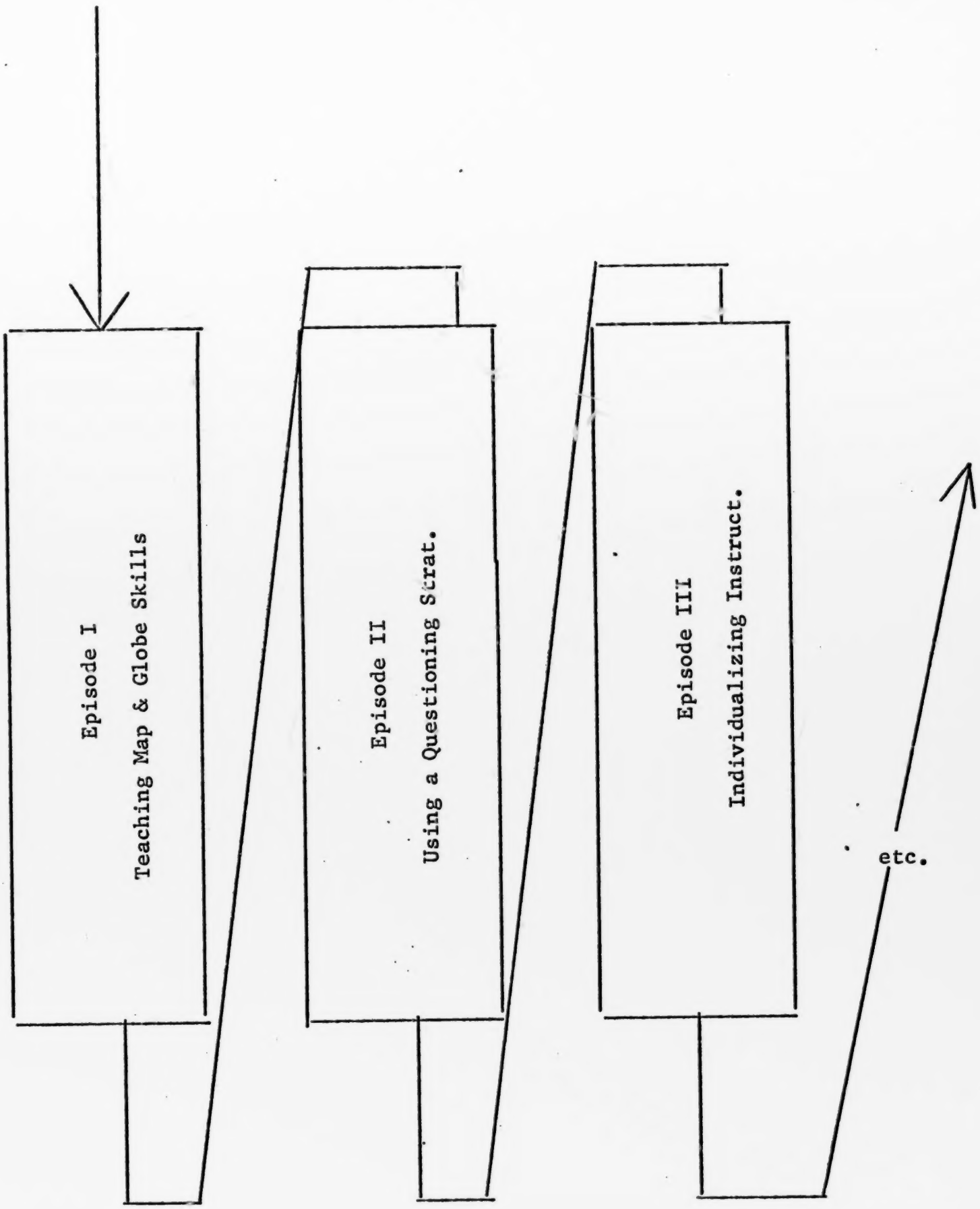
3. Though not exactly a misconception, there may be some question at this point as to the relevance of this preservice approach to the inservice theme of this session. In the trial run, we discovered that inner-city teachers learned some new ideas themselves as a result of working with preservice college students. Teaching of students in OCMC is done cooperatively in a kind of team arrangement by the teacher and by the professor; consequently, as an integral part of the OCMC package, inservice education seminars are provided the teaching staff. Some teachers find need for

orientation to some of the newer techniques used in OCMC in order to "tool up" for demonstrations and related work with students. Thus, the appropriate sessions are held to meet these needs. When skillfully planned, such in-service contacts can provide professional growth opportunities extending well beyond sheer preparation to work effectively with the students; and, if this occurs, long range benefits are provided for both the school district and the teacher. Such benefits can also serve as incentives for school district participation in an OCMC program.

What is OCMC?

OCMC is an innovation in higher education which is designed to make pedagogical instruction more realistic and meaningful by changing its setting from the campus lecture hall to the actual urban school. But more than a change in setting is made, for emphasis is placed on giving the student many opportunities to interact with inner-city teachers and their pupils as a mode of learning effective teaching in social studies. The instructional thrust of OCMC, therefore, represents a departure from the lecture-oriented conventional course. The role of the student is changed from passive hearer to involved participant.

(TRANSPARENCY 1 TO BE SHOWN HERE)



Transparency 1

TEACHING EPISODE

Using Questioning Strategy

THERORETICAL PHASE	Professor discusses strategy for classroom questioning.
DEMONSTRATIONAL PHASE	Demonstration teacher teaches lesson using the strategy.
APPLICATIONAL PHASE	Students and cooperating teachers plan for microteaching using a questioning strategy. Students teach.
ANALYTICAL PHASE	Students and professor analyze teaching efforts.

Transparency 2

Teaching episodes are the instructional subsystems in OCMC. Each of these concentrates on the development of specific teaching behaviors associated with a particular teaching strategy. For instance, Episode #1 could focus on teaching behaviors effective in developing map and globe skills; Episode #2 on teaching behaviors in using a questioning strategy in an inductive lesson; and Episode #3 on teaching behaviors in individualizing instruction. The number of episodes varies in any particular application of OCMC, because it is dependent upon such variables as students' previous experience and present learning demands.

(TRANSPARENCY 2 TO BE SHOWN HERE)

Episodes consist of four instructional phases planned to aid the student in bridging the gap between theory and functional application. Each begins with the theoretical introduction to the strategy under study. This is followed by a second phase in which the student observes a demonstration of the strategy in action in an urban classroom. Phase three (Not to be confused with the new deordorant bar of the same name) is the applicational phase, and in it students have the opportunity to <u>field test</u> on their own either the strategy just presented or if they chose one of their own creation. Last comes phase four, the analytical dimension, during which analysis and

self-analysis of the student's teaching efforts are made. The transparency illustrates these four sequential phases.

Videotape recordings are made during phases two and three. Recordings of demonstration lessons provide permanent records that are parts of an ever-growing teaching resource library. These are useful to students as sources of ideas in planning their microteaching sessions. Thus, for example, a student developing a strategy for individualizing instruction has, in addition to the live demonstration he watches, a library of videotape recordings to consult for ideas. Recordings made in phase three are of students engaged in microteaching situations and they are used in phase four for analysis.

Some Assumptions about What OCMC can do for the College Student and the Inner-City Child.

1. OCMC gives students the opportunity to field test pedagogical ideas right after they are introduced. This immediate applicability factor is an ingredient missing in the traditional approach. Often, as you well know, it is not until student teaching that the student is given the opportunity to get into the classroom and try out ideas. Such delay in practical applicability of methods course learnings is unfortunate for a variety of reasons--among them the following: (a) it tends to make lecture-hall presentations seem all the more irrelevant and impractical; (b) it

can lead to the theory-practice dichotomy; and (c) it probably tends to yield negative instead of positive reinforcement for the professor's ideas.

2. OCMC gives early contact with children in a structured yet genuine classroom setting, which can cause the student to confront important questions and make crucial decisions concerning his career potential as an inner-city teacher.

3. Early pupil contact afforded in OCMC can serve to generate a sense of professional dedication to helping children in unfortunate circumstances. That this can really happen is indicated by the following quotation from a pilot-run participant:

> This experience has made me realize that some children in our schools are not as fortunate as I was when I went to grade school. I see how these children must be treated--we must realize their potential and help them make full use of it. This episode has made me see where teachers are <u>really</u> needed and also the importance of being dedicated to the profession.

4. The inner-city child is given increased opportunity to interact with and respond to an adult in OCMC. Students in the pilot run were assigned classrooms so that a pupil-to-teacher ratio of about 4:1 obtained at such times as the students were present. It was then possible to give children more individual attention. And this, as will be later indicated, appeared to benefit Lagrange children both psychologically and academically.

The Pilot Run

The Lagrange school in Toledo, Ohio was chosen as the site for the pilot run because it is an inner-city school serving a diverse ethnic clientele, and also because it could provide college students first-hand contact with many problems commonly associated with core-area schools. Rather optimistically, we hoped that this initial contact with deprived children would be rewarding to the extent that at least some of our students would be motivated to request similar assignment later on in student teaching.

Six classes were used, and they were 2 sixth grades; 1 fourth; 2 third; and 1 second. Class size varied between 30 and 35 youngsters.

The students were members of a junior-year methods course in elementary social studies teaching techniques. As their counterparts in the other sections of the course were instructed conventionally, the members of the pilot section received a portion of their instruction through the OCMC approach. While the goal envisioned in future applications of OCMC is that of conducting the entire course off campus; a six-week off-campus experience was judged adequate for this initial attempt. A total of 35 students elected to participate in the pilot section; others, who for one reason or another chose not to be so involved, enrolled in other sections of the course.

The six-week instructional sequence for the pilot run was built around three episodes. They were: (a) teaching a map and/or globe skill; (b) conducting an inductive lesson based on the use of open-ended questions to stimulate inquiry and discovery; and (c) meeting individual needs through small-group work. Each was structured into the four theory-to-practice phases earlier explained.

Before beginning an episode, teachers and professor met to arrange demonstrational and applicational activities. Among other things, this involved deciding what would be demonstrated for the students and what could be expected in terms of student performance in the application phase. Whenever an episode involved unfamiliar ideas and/or techniques, the appropriate inservice sessions were held. For instance, some of the teachers at Lagrange were unfamiliar with Aschner's four types of questions and their use. Since this information was pre-requisite to Episode #2 activities, teachers were first given an orientation to this material before plans were made for the demonstration and other activities.

Activities for the student began with a theoretical orientation to the strategy under consideration. Students then observed a demonstration designed to illustrate the functionality of the ideas just presented

theoretically. Following each demonstration, students met with the demonstration teacher to discuss the lesson. Student reaction to these post-demonstration sessions indicated strongly that insight gained into pupil behavior was one of the most productive outcomes. By videotape it was possible to go back to specific incidents which had occurred during the demonstration and consider these with the teacher from both diagnostic and prescriptive points of view. After this interchange with the demonstration teacher, students met with cooperating teachers to make preparatory arrangements for the applicational activities to follow during the second week.

Upwards of six hours were devoted by students during the second week to planning and teaching activities. Usually they worked with groups of 3-5 children in microteaching situations, although a few worked with individual children only.

The episodes concluded with an analysis session during which productive discussions resulted even though equipment limitations precluded making the desired microteaching videotapes.

What Students Thought of OCMC

Students were polled in order to procure feedback on the value of the pilot run from their standpoint. Here are some of the results.

1. 34 out of 34 said that OCMC had made a worthwhile contribution to their pre-service preparation, and they believed increased use should be made of the theoretical-demonstrational-applicational-analytical instructional sequence used in OCMC.

2. One respondent commented: "Every student going into teaching should have an experience like this. It builds up more interest in wanting to teach and gives everyone a chance to see if teaching is really his field."

3. Asked about the effects of their being in the classroom on the lives of the inner-city children, students overwhelmingly (90%) indicated their feeling that pupils had benefitted both psychologically and academically. One student put it this way: "...this experience had very positive effects on the children. They were able to have a sense of relationship with an adult as well as with 4 or 5 of their peers. Maybe, at home, with brothers and sisters running around and needing attention, these children were not really getting the attention and companionship from their parents which is necessary to have. One child in my group spoke frequently with very worthwhile contributions when she was in a small group, but when there was a large activity she did not volunteer once."

From another student came this comment: "If nothing else was accomplished by our presence at Lagrange, the children have been familiarized with map and globe skills and realize they can put on paper a symbolic representation of the area in which they live. My case, being a male teacher, in the second grade classroom of Mrs. Baugher, was an experience in itself. Most children were surprised or startled to find a man actually spending time with them, whether in the classroom or home. This is important because so few fathers spend time with their children in the hard core area."

Prospects for the Future

Although the pilot run which I have just described was successful in terms of the enthusiastic response given it by students, teachers, and the children themselves, the need was indicated for additional refinement. Consequently, another run needs to be made in order to perfect operational techniques, and an evaluation study must be done in order to measure outcomes precisely. Planning efforts are presently underway for an advanced pilot run to be made next year in an urban St. Louis elementary school. Preparations for the application will include the development of an instructional model for OCMC which can serve not only as an operational guide for the next pilot run, but which can serve as a guide for other

field applications as well. An evaluation scheme will also be developed for use in the advanced trial.